

# METHODOLOGY

## Method Overview

This was a multi-stage project using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Focus group discussions were used to ensure that all issues relevant to customers were included, and to gain in-depth information. A statewide telephone survey was designed to quantify customer opinion about various aspects of OFM's products and services.

### 1. Focus Groups

Two focus group discussions were held to assess the scope of issues to be contained in the telephone survey. These discussions also served to ensure that the terminology used in the telephone survey would communicate the issues accurately to OFM customers. The first group was made up of nine mid-level managers, each from a different agency in the Olympia area. The second group included ten line staff, also each from a different agency in the Olympia area. Each was a two-hour discussion held on June 30 in Olympia. An experienced researcher from Gilmore Research moderated the discussions using a topic guide approved by OFM. The findings from these discussions, along with issues pre-identified by OFM, were used to draft the telephone survey questionnaire.

Two additional two-hour focus group discussions were held on August 10 in Olympia. The first included eight Executive Cabinet level agency directors, and the second had eight Legislative Committee staff members who have budget or fiscal analysis responsibilities. The purpose of these discussions was to determine how OFM access, service, information and responsiveness are viewed from the agency director and legislative perspectives. These are specialized customer groups whose needs and issues might not fit into a broader customer survey. Gilmore Research worked with OFM to design the topic guides for these groups and moderated the discussions. The findings from these discussions augment the findings from the first two focus groups and the telephone survey.

Participants for all of the focus groups were recruited by telephone by the Gilmore Research recruiting staff in Seattle from lists provided by OFM. The survey scoping participants were recruited from the broad customer list of over 2,000 names compiled by OFM. The agency directors were recruited from a list of 23 current Executive Cabinet members, and the legislative staff from a list of 37 people who have on-going contact with OFM. Participants were assured of anonymity and sent a statement to that effect, if requested. Gilmore Research staff were the only observers present for the group discussions and the only ones to review audiotapes of the discussions.

Summary reports of the latter two focus group discussion findings are shown in Appendices 4 and 5, under separate cover.

## 2. Telephone Survey

Telephone methodology was selected for the quantitative survey because it allows screening to ensure the respondent is appropriate for the study. Also, response rate can be increased by making multiple attempts to reach a person or set an appointment at the respondent's convenience.

A questionnaire was designed for telephone administration using input from the OFM Customer Survey Team and the findings of the manager and line staff focus groups. The questionnaire was programmed for computer-assisted telephone interviewing, then pretested with randomly selected OFM customers and revised to correct administration and clarity problems identified in the pretests. One important finding of the scoping focus groups was that customers often had difficulty thinking of OFM as a whole and that question sequences needed to be developed for the different OFM areas and services. Many closed-end rating questions were used, but all respondents to the telephone interview also had open-ended question opportunities to provide opinions in their own words. Questions were assigned based on each respondent's contact experience with OFM. If a respondent had contact with more than one OFM area, question sequences were assigned at random from among the OFM areas to ensure that no one person was given a lengthy, repetitive survey. A copy of the telephone questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1.

The survey sample was drawn from OFM customer lists compiled and cleaned by the OFM Customer Survey Team. The original lists were submitted by the various OFM divisions to represent (as near as possible) a census of individuals who had contact with OFM within, roughly, the previous year. The final master list became the total population, numbering 3,045, 2,598 of which had telephone numbers. To ensure that there would be a sufficient number of interviews with managers, the sample was stratified by managers and everyone else. "Everyone else" as a category is called non-managers, and includes line staff as well as customers from cities, towns and other jurisdictions that deal with Forecasting. Almost all of the managers with telephone numbers were sampled and just over one-third of the non-managers to complete a total of 107 manager interviews and 300 non-manager interviews. (See the next section for more sampling information.)

The 7-point scale was used for rating various attributes in the telephone survey. In the findings, the top two scores of 6 and 7 are combined to show high ratings. To show low ratings, the score of 3 was combined with 1 and 2 because there were relatively few 1 and 2 scores. Throughout this report, findings are discussed as high (6+7), middle (4+5) and low (1+2+3).

The telephone survey was conducted from the Gilmore telephone center in Seattle between July 30 and August 20, 1998. The interview averaged 13 minutes in length. Open-ended responses were coded and all data checked, cleaned and processed in-house by Gilmore Research. Computer cross-tabulations of all responses were prepared and appear under separate cover.

## Weighting and Projectability

Managers were over-represented in the telephone survey to ensure an adequate number for reporting and analysis. Consequently, to report on all OFM customers, the data were weighted so that managers and all other customers were represented in their actual proportion in the population.

Some of the contact names and telephone numbers in the original lists were, in actuality, not eligible. These were situations in which the person was no longer in the position and could not be located, or the number was disconnected. These are shown below as “% disqualified” and represent about 21% of all the manager listings and 25% of all the other listings.

Prior to developing the weights, Gilmore adjusted the population figures to take these ineligible units into account. The following table shows these adjustments.

	<u>Managers</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Total</u>
Original population	237	2,808	3,045
With telephone numbers	206	2,392	2,598
Sampled	199	863	1,062
Completed interviews	107	300	407
Disqualified	41	213	254
% disqualified	20.6%	24.7%	23.9%
Adjusted population	188	2,114	2,302

The adjusted population figures were used for computing the weights, which are 0.312 for managers and 1.245 for non-managers.

The findings from the telephone survey are projectable to the adjusted population. The margin of error for the weighted total is  $\pm 5.3\%$ , at the 95% level of confidence. For managers, the margin of error is  $\pm 9.5\%$ , and for non-managers it is  $\pm 5.7\%$ .

## Survey Response and Sample Disposition

The response to the telephone survey was very good. The cooperation rate for the managers was 95% and for the non-managers (i.e., everyone else), 94%. This is the rate of interviews completed out of all eligible cases contacted.

Another measure of response is the percentage of refusals among all the calls made. As seen in Table 1, the refusal category (refused to start the interview or started and refused to finish) was 3% for managers and 2% for non-managers. This is contrasted with 12% refusal among households in July for another state telephone project with stringent research protocol. Such a low refusal rate is often associated with participants having advance notice that they will be contacted. Agency directors were sent a general notice about the survey but there was no direct contact with participants until the telephone call. It speaks well for the feeling toward OFM that most people contacted were willing to be surveyed.

Disposition of the sample is shown in Table 1, by manager and non-manager and by the division lists. About 6% of the names contacted said they had no contact with OFM in the previous 12 months and were not interviewed. Another 5% appeared to be available but could never be contacted, nor did they return a message left on voice mail. Two percent (2%) were gone from their desks for the duration of the study, and another 2% never answered any of the repeated phone attempts (no voice mail, just ring-no-answer).

The most problematic issue with the lists appears to be keeping current with customers. Overall, 14% of the names were not at the number called and another 17% of the numbers shown with names were disconnected. This is close to one-third of all the names that could not be located. As might be expected, this was more of a problem with non-managers and with the accounting list, in particular.

Telephone Numbers Used:	Total (1062)	Manager (199)	Non- Manager (863)	Division Lists <sup>1</sup>				Cities and Towns (98)
				Budget (143)	Accounting (846)	Forecast (44)	SACS <sup>2</sup> (6)	
Complete interview	38%	54%	35%	66%	33%	52%	33%	63%
No contact with OFM <sup>3</sup>	6	7	5	1	5	2	0	6
Unavailable/voice mail <sup>4</sup>	5	8	4	6	5	5	0	2
Gone for duration	2	*	3	4	2	11	17	3
No answer <sup>4</sup>	2	2	2	1	3	0	0	0
Refuse to participate	2	3	2	1	2	0	0	4
Language barrier	1	2	1	1	1	2	0	1
Name no longer at #	14	15	14	4	15	2	0	11
Disconnected #	17	4	20	3	21	4	33	1
Problem with # <sup>5</sup>	8	4	9	11	9	14	0	7
Fax/modem #	1	*	1	0	1	2	0	1
Residential #	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	1
Duplicate names <sup>1</sup>	2	1	2	2	2	4	17	0

<sup>\*</sup> Less than 0.5%  
<sup>1</sup> Some names appeared on more than one list  
<sup>2</sup> Interpret with caution, small cell size  
<sup>3</sup> No contact in last 12 months  
<sup>4</sup> After repeated attempts  
<sup>5</sup> Menu "loop", wrong area code, never rings, goes out of state

Each division's list was a fairly good source of reaching people who used the products and services of that division. As seen in Table 2, all of the customers from the budget list reported having contact with the Budget Division and almost all of the customers from the forecasting and cities and towns lists reported having contact with the Population and Forecasting Group. A majority of the customers reached from the accounting list said they had contact with the Accounting Division, and two-thirds said their contact was with Financial Systems. As might be expected, the greatest overlap occurred between the accounting and budget lists, where 41% to 46% of the customers, respectively, had contact with the other division only, or in addition to the division with which they were originally associated on the master list.

Only two people from the SACS list fell into the sample. Their responses are shown here even though the cell size is very small, because the SACS list was small, but specialized.

Table 2 Relationship of Customer List to Reported Service Use					
% Reporting Contact in Past 12 Months	Respondent's List of Origin				
	<u>Budget</u> (95)	<u>Accounting</u> (277)	<u>Forecasting</u> (23)	<u>Cities &amp; Towns</u> (62)	<u>SACS *</u> (2)
Financial Systems	59%	68%	13%	0%	0%
Accounting Division	46	57	9	7	0
Budget Division	100	41	26	5	100
Population and Forecasting	29	8	96	94	0
Personal Services Contracting	21	18	4	2	0
Small Agency Client Services (SACS)	4	1	0	0	100
* Interpret with caution; very small cell size.					
Q6: Which of these OFM product and service areas have you had contact with in the past 12 months?					